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Message Text

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42
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 AGR-05 EB-07 DHA-02 IO-10 COME-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIEP-01 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /091 W
---------- 062640
P R 081158Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6558
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 16098

1. SUMMARY. THE ONLY IMPORTANT ITEM IN THE DOMESTIC PORTION OF PEL'SHE'S NOVEMBER 6 SPEECH WAS HIS RATHER GLOOMY REMARKS ON AGRICULTURE. HE DID NOT GIVE A HARVEST FIGURE, BUT ADMITTED THAT DIFFICULTIES WILL HAVE TO BE OVERCOME. OF COURSE, HE SAID NOTHING ABOUT FOREIGN GRAIN PURCHASES. HE SHOWED SOME SENSITIVITY ABOUT WESTERN CRITICISM OF LACK OF CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USSR. AND HE PRAISED BREZHNEV FOR HIS PEACDFUL COEXISTENCE POLICY. F.D. KULAKOV, PARTY SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE, WAS ABSENT FROM THE MEETING. PEL'SHE'S CHOICE AS THE SPEAKER MAY HAVE BEEN A TRIBUTE TO HIS 76 YEARS, BUT IT INDICATED NO POLICY TILT DOMES-TICALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DOMESTIC PORTION OF PEL'SHE'S SPEECH WAS FAIRLY BLAND IN TONE, BUT THE AGRICULTURAL PROBLEM SHOWED THROUGH IN SEVERAL
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PLACES. IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE AN UNNECESSARILY FRANK COMMENTARY

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ON THRE TREATMENT OF AGRICULTURE UNDER THE SOVIETS, PEL'SHE STATED THAT INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION NOW IS 203 TIMES THAT OF 1917 WHEREAS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IS 3.4 TIMES THAT OF 1917. PEL'SHE PRAISED SOVIET FARM PERFORMANCE DURING THE DECADE SINCE THE MARCH PLENUM AND NOTED THAT PARTY AND STATE CONCERN FOR PROVIDING MORE FARM MACHINERY, COLLECTIVE SUPPORT AND AID, AND MOVING FARM MACHINERY AROUND HAD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF BAD WEATHER. BUT HE ADMITTED THAT DIFFICULTIES HAD ARISEN WHICH WILL DEMAND EFFORTS TO OVERCOME. THE CLOSEST HE CAME TO A HARVEST FIGURE WAS THE CLAIM THAT AGRICULTURE DID BETTER IN THE 9TH THAN IN THE 8TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIOD. FOREIGN GRAIN PURCHASES WERE NOT MENTIONED.

3. AFTER NOTING THE PRECARIOUS ECONOMIC SITUATION OF WESTERN COUNTRIES, PEL'SHE RESPONDED TO WESTERN CRITICS OF THE SOVIET UNION IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY ASSERTING THAT SOVIET CITIZENS ARE PROVIDED FOR AND CARED FOR MORE FULLY AND RELIABLY THAN IN ANY BOURGEOIS SOCIETY.

4. ON SEVERAL SEPARATE OCCASIONS PEL'SHE RENDERED HOMAGE TO BREZHNEV AND THESE VARIOUS REFERENCES, AS EXPECTED, WERE GREETED WITH "THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE" BY THE AUDIENCE. WHILE PEL'SHE'S ENCOMIUMS IN THIS REGARD DID NOT MATCH THE OBSEQUIOUS FLATTERY OF GROMYKO ON THIS SAME OCCASION LAST YEAR (MOSCOW 16966, 1974) THE FEELING IN THE HALL AS WELL AS ON THE PART OF TV VIEWERS (THE CAMERA FOCUSED MANY TIMES ON BREZHNEV DURING PEL'SHE'S SPEECH) WAS THAT LEONID ILYICH IS CLEARLY IN THE SADDLE.

5. COMMENT: JUST AS LAST YEAR, THE ONLY MOSCOW-BASED POLITBURO MEMBER MISSING FROM THE MEETING WAS F.D. KULAKOV, THE PARTY SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF AGRICULTURE. WHO WAS LAST REPORTED ACTIVE IN PUBLIC LIFE ON OCTOBER 15. HIS ABSENCE FROM A "COMMAND PERFORMANCE" SUCH AS THE NOVEMBER 6 MEETING PROBABLY INDICATES A PHYSICAL INDISPOSITION. A CHAIR APPARENTLY WAS LEFT VACANT FOR HIM ON THE DAIS JUST TO THE RIGHT OF GROMYKO, AND THIS PROBABLY WILL FUEL SPECULATION IN THE WESTERN PRESS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF CURRENT SOVIET AGRICULTURAL DIFFICULTIES AND KULAKOV'S KNOWN TIES TO BREZHNEV. HOWEVER, HIS PORTRAIT WAS DISPLAYED FREQUENTLY IN THE NOVEMBER 7 CIVILIAN MARCHPAST AND WAS PUT IN THE CORRECT POSITION WHERE PORTRAITS WERE DISPLAYED
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IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER IN THE TRADITIONAL SPOTS IN MOSCOW AND WE THEREFORE DO NOT ATTRIBUTE SPECIAL IMPORTANCE TO THIS SINGLE INDICATOR.

6. THE CHOICE OF PEL'SHE AS THE SPEAKER MAY HAVE BEEN A TRIBUTE TO HIM IN HIS 76TH YEAR AND PERHAPS A SIGNAL THAT THIS MAY BE HIS LAST OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE SUCH A SPEECH. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE CHOICE OF HIM AS THE SPEAKER WAS DICTATED BY

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NICETIES CONNECTED WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS. PEL'SHE IS NOT
STRONGLY LINKED WITH CONTROVERSIAL POLICIES. THUS HIS APPEARANCE
DOES NOT SIGNAL A TILT IN ANY DISCERNABLE DIRECTION.
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